

Mr. President:

I rise to introduce the Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act of 2006.

One of the most important issues facing mankind is the problem of global warming. Global warming is real and it is already happening. Its effects are being felt across the globe and the longer we delay, the more severe these effects will be. The broad consensus within the scientific community is that global warming has begun, is largely the result of human activity, and is accelerating. Atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations have risen to 378 parts per million, nearly one third above pre-industrial levels and higher than at any time during the past 400,000 years. Projections indicate that stabilizing concentrations at 450 parts per million would still mean a temperature increase of two to four degrees Fahrenheit. Such warming will result in more extreme weather, increased flooding and drought, disruption of agricultural and water systems, threats to human health and loss of sensitive species and ecosystems.

In order to prevent and minimize these effects, we must take global actions to address this issue as soon as possible. We owe that to ourselves and to future generations.

The overwhelming majority of Americans support taking some form of action on climate change. I am today introducing the Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act, which I believe responds to that call. I believe this is the most far reaching and forward thinking climate change bill ever introduced. It sets a goal of an 80% reduction in global warming pollutants by 2050. It provides a roadmap for actions that we will need to take over the next few decades to combat global warming. I believe that if this bill were passed, it would put us on the path to potentially solving the global warming problem. If it were passed, we would reshape our economy to become more energy independent, cleaner and more economically competitive. If it were passed, we would have a chance of avoiding some of the worst and most dangerous effects of global warming. If it were passed, we would be in a position to negotiate with other countries as part of the global solution.

Some will say that this bill imposes requirements that ask too much of industry. Some will say that this bill contains requirements that we cannot easily meet. I say first of all that the costs of inaction vastly outweigh the costs of action, and that we have a responsibility to future generations not to leave the earth far worse off than when we found it-- with a fundamentally altered climate system. Temperature changes, sea level rise, hurricanes, floods and droughts can affect food production, national security, the spread of disease and the survival of endangered species. These are not things to trifle with on the basis of industry cost estimates, which have frequently been overstated.

But perhaps more importantly, we can act to reduce global warming. We can reduce emissions to 1990 levels between now and 2020 through a reduction of just 2 percent per year. Energy efficiency alone could play a major part in reaching reductions and new technologies can help as well. Moreover, additional deployment of existing renewable energy sources, including bio-fuels, can also help substantially. If we were to take the actions suggested in this bill, we would find that we would enhance our energy independence, and we would become a world leader in clean energy technologies. American innovation can position us as the world leader in clean technologies.

In my final year in the Senate, I have often asked myself "What lasting actions can I take to make the world a better place?" I hope that by proposing real action on climate change, and passing the torch to a new generation of those committed to protecting the environment, that I can help make a difference for us all. Global warming is upon us now. The question is, can we take action now, before it is too late?

We know what we need to do, we know how much we must reduce, and we have the technology to do so. The question for this body is, do we have the political will? Can we overcome our fears and insecurity and act decisively to combat global warming? That is the opportunity and challenge of the coming years, which my bill on global warming seeks to address. I urge my colleagues to join me in the quest for a better, safer world that is free of the enormous threat posed by dangerous global warming. I urge my colleagues to support this important piece of legislation.